Bushehr Free Zone can become Iran's top export terminal: *Businessman*

Economy Desk

A member of the Bushehr Chamber of Commerce and the Iran-Kuwait Joint Chamber maintained that the Bushehr Free Trade-Industrial Zone, with its strategic position in the Persian Gulf, direct access to open waters, and proximity to the countries bordering this body of water, has the capacity to become one of the country's most important export terminals.

Sirous Dehqani, however, told IRNA that the realization of this goal requires a focus on local advantages, the development of logistics infrastructure, and the facilitation of administrative and commercial processes.

"Furthermore, on this path, the specialization of export terminals for non-metallic minerals and petrochemical products, the mechanization of loading and unloading processes, and the establishment of a single administrative and electronic window must be prioritized," he added.

The member of the Bushehr Chamber of Commerce said that the approach of the free zone should not be based on "scattered efforts," but rather investments must be concentrated on the "main and local advantages of the province".

According to Dehqani, directing investment toward the processing, granulation, and export of non-metallic minerals — including limestone, gypsum, and clinker — and providing the infrastructure for bulk and container exports of these products can play a role in the development of non-oil exports.

The development of downstream petrochemical industries and the processing and standard packaging industries of fisheries and aquatic products, in accordance with the needs of the markets of Arab and Asian countries, are also among the capacities that Dehqani believes must be taken into consideration.

The member of the Iran-Kuwait Joint Chamber emphasized that the main goal should be the creation of added value for the province's manufactured products and the prevention of raw material sales, "so that the Bushehr Free Zone can play a more effective role in the regional trade chain".

The photo shows the front gate of the Bushehr Free Trade-Industrial Zone Organization in Bushehr, southern Iran.
IRNA

Necessity of modernizing port and logistics infrastructure

Dehqani considered the reduction of cargo dwell time and vessel waiting time as factors affecting the increase in the competitiveness of ports and said: Equipping wharves with modern and mechanized loading and unloading facilities and using continuous loading equipment can increase the speed of port operations and reduce the costs caused by vessel stoppage.

He described the development of port backlands, the creation of silos and smart warehouses, and the development of combined transportation and the proper connection of transportation networks to port terminals as other infrastructure needs of the Bushehr Free Zone.

"The connection of Bushehr province to the national railway network, the completion of the Bushehr railway project, and the development of desalination, electricity, communications, and logistics services infrastructure must be taken into consideration in the development plan of the free zone," Dehqani reminded.

Attracting domestic and foreign investment, developing non-oil exports, creating added value for petrochemical, agricultural, fisheries, and mineral products, creating employment and developing human resources, and strengthening maritime transit will be among the most important functions of this zone.

"The approach of the Bushehr Free Zone should not be merely import-oriented, but must be based on industry-orientedness, export-orientedness, completion of the value chain, development of the sea-based economy, and trade facilitation," he emphasized.

Chabahar Airport ready to resume full operations

MEHR

Economy Desk

Chabahar Airport in southeastern Iran, after conducting technical and operational assessments, has achieved the necessary readiness to return to Iran's aviation operational cycle following the earlier US-Israeli attacks.

According to the country's Civil Aviation Organization, a delegation of inspectors and technical experts from the offices of airport operations oversight and aviation operations examined and evaluated the infrastructure, facilities, and airport and air navigation equipment, IRNA reported.

This visit was conducted with the aim of examining the level of readiness and capability for safe utilization of civilian infrastructure and sections used in civil aviation; sections that had suffered damage during the recent imposed war.

During this assessment, the status of equipment and systems related to airport operations and air navigation services, the extent of damage repair, and also the technical and operational requirements needed for the resumption of airport activity were examined.

Based on the results of the technical and operational assessments conducted, Chabahar Airport's readiness for the resumption of aviation activities was confirmed.

Director General of Crisis Management of Sistan and Baluchestan Governorate Majid Mohebbi had previously said that in the recent attacks by the US and Israel, in addition to some military infrastructure, parts of the port area, maritime surveillance and monitoring, and also airport facilities of the province had been damaged.

Mohebbi, stating that the airports of Iranshahr, Saravan, and Konarak had suffered damage, added: "At Konarak and Iranshahr airports, the damages to infrastructure facilities have been significant."

The attack on airports and other public and service facilities in various provinces of Iran indicates the criminal and unlawful expansion of America and Israel's target list to civilian infrastructure and public services; attacks whose effects have not been limited merely to physical damages and have directly affected the lives, health, security, livelihood, and access of citizens to essential services.

Banking, trade, and transit

Hemmati's 2026 regional tour, Iran's economic pivot

By Golzar Aghaei
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OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

Abdolnaser Hemmati, governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), has logged five foreign trips in six months, targeting payment corridors, blocked assets, and border trade. When Hemmati traveled to Istanbul on September 13, 2026, to attend the meeting of central bank governors from Islamic countries, it marked the latest stop in a year of intensive financial diplomacy. The trip — part of a broader 1405 regional tour that has already taken him to Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, India, and Iraq — reflects a shift from reactive crisis management to an attempt to build alternative economic architecture.

Istanbul; money, mechanisms, and Muslim markets

In Istanbul, CBI Governor Hemmati met with the Turkish and Tunisian central bank governors on the sidelines of the Islamic countries' central bank summit. Talks focused on expanding monetary and banking cooperation among Islamic states and creating new mechanisms for trade exchanges. For Iran — cut off from SWIFT and under renewed sanctions — this represents a possible parallel financial channel.

At the OIC meeting, Hemmati said some external and sanctions-related pressure is deliberately aimed at fueling perceived inflation, eroding public confidence, and turning economic hardship into social discontent. He stressed monetary discipline, exchange-rate stability, and prioritizing essential goods in foreign-exchange allocation as the central bank's first line of defense.

The 1405 (2026) tour: from Baghdad to Moscow

In the six months after the 12-day war, CBI Governor Hemmati made five foreign trips, with the Istanbul summit the latest. The main stops were:

- **Iraq** (August 2026): Pursued banking claims from Iraqi banks and government; sought to sustain/expand approximately $12 billion annual exports; met trade minister, finance minister, and central bank governor; focused on removing trade and banking obstacles and speeding up border procedures.
- **Russia** (June 2026): Pushed for expanded banking cooperation, more financing for bilateral trade, and a stronger role for Mir Business Bank in supporting the INSTC; announced a permanent banking committee; stressed lower transaction costs and mechanisms independent of conventional restrictions.
- **India** (August 2026): At the first BRICS finance ministers/central bank governors meeting, called for a dedicated BRICS financial corridor and integration of national payment networks.
- **Qatar** (June 2026): Pursued release of blocked Iranian assets — reportedly approximately $12 billion, possibly up to $25 billion; Qatar already holds about $6 billion transferred from South Korea in 2023.

Transit; the missing pillar

Transit is essential to Hemmati's regional strategy. The INSTC, linking India, Iran, and Russia, has been a recurring theme. In Moscow, Hemmati emphasized Mir Business Bank's role in supporting the corridor and removing obstacles to opening letters of credit (LCs) for Iranian traders. In Baghdad, he highlighted the need for new mechanisms at border entry points to speed up trade.

The activation of a permanent banking committee with Russia is also intended to keep transit-related financial agreements on track.

For Iran, transit revenue offers a way to monetize its geography and reduce reliance on oil exports.

The domestic anchor

All of this international maneuvering is anchored to a domestic reality that Hemmati has been unusually candid about. At the "Iran Economic Outlook 1405" conference, he disclosed that the CBI's foreign exchange policy reforms had reduced daily currency demand at the exchange center from roughly $600 million to about $150 million, while foreign exchange returning to the trade cycle had doubled from $2 billion in 2025 to over $4 billion in the Persian calendar month of Bahman (January 22–February 19). Net foreign currency purchases added $4.5 billion to Iran's reserves.

Yet he also delivered a stark warning: real per capita income fell approximately 47% between 2010–2024, and gross fixed capital formation contracted by 13.2% in the third quarter of 2025.

"Price stability alone does not create new goods and services," he said, emphasizing that restoring purchasing power requires production, investment, productivity, and productive employment — a task beyond the central bank's sole capacity.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati (4th-L) holds talks with his Tunisian counterpart on the sidelines of the summit of Central Bank Governors of Islamic countries on September 14, 2026.
IRNA

A pivot under pressure

Hemmati's 2026 regional tour is a rational but second-best response to Iran's financial isolation. It seeks partial substitutes for SWIFT and dollar clearing through bilateral payment links with Russia, BRICS corridors, Iraqi banking-claims recovery, and Qatari asset release. These are mainly liquidity and transaction-cost measures; they can ease trade financing and FX pressure, but they cannot drive growth.

Each external channel has limits: local-currency settlement faces convertibility and liquidity problems; BRICS corridors lack a settlement asset; Iraqi claims are largely one-time; Qatari asset releases are often restricted and may fuel inflation if not sterilized.

Domestically, investment is contracting, per-capita income has fallen sharply, banks remain fragile, and fiscal dominance weakens inflation control. External financial diplomacy can buy time, but it cannot offset these structural problems.

Bottom line: It is a liquidity strategy, not a growth strategy — necessary but not sufficient. The key question is whether external openings mature fast enough to offset internal economic decay.